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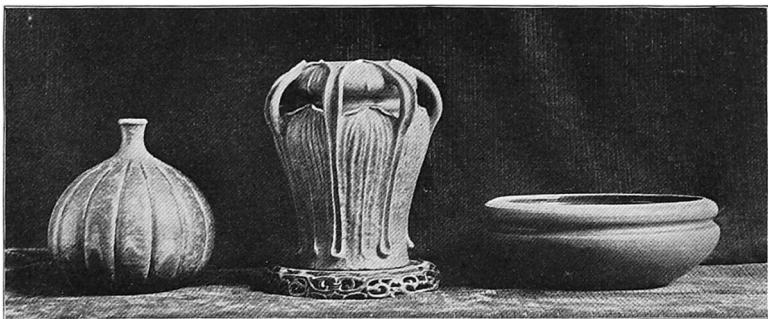
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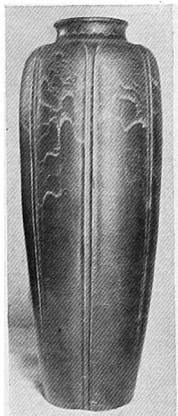
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GRUEBY POTTERY
Designed by George P. Kendrick

LATTER-DAY DEVELOPMENTS IN AMERICAN POTTERY

The appearance of a new and enlarged edition of Edwin Atlee Barber's valuable work on American pottery* calls especial attention to recent developments in the fictile art of this country. American pottery really dates from 1684, when the first white ware was manufactured in the United States, but the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 imparted new impetus to the art, and gave rise to a movement which subsequently resulted in a most remarkable progress. To come down to still later times, the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, marked the beginning of an industrial era during which the finest specimens of the potter's art in this country have been produced.



GRUEBY VASE

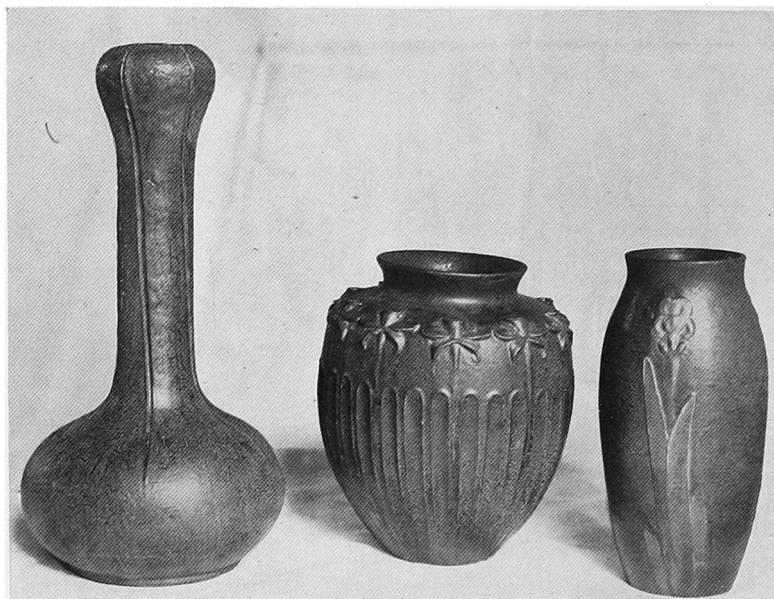
Much of the early work of our potters was but the feeble beginnings of an art in which our workmen had to grope their way, copyists rather than innovators. Manufacturers had, moreover, to face a deep-seated prejudice on the part of the public against American-made product, since purchasers seemed to assume that the ware of this country was a crude makeshift, and that there was nothing artistic or excellent except what was imported from Europe.

Indeed, literature fostered this senseless prejudice. As Mr. Barber points out, foreign writers would have the world believe that the United States could boast of no ceramic history, and even

* "The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States," by Edwin Atlee Barber. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

our own chroniclers, singularly enough, have neglected a branch of our industrial progress which is neither insignificant nor devoid of interest. The fact is—and Mr. Barber does well to emphasize it—that this country can show a fictile art almost as ancient as that of Great Britain, and one that has been developed on almost parallel though necessarily narrower lines.

Another point worthy of mention in this connection is, that pre-



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vious to 1876 there were but few private or public collections of potteries or porcelains in the United States. The interest that was awakened by the Philadelphia Exposition became widespread, and the attention of individuals and institutions was directed toward ceramics as a form of art as worthy of representation in museums and private collections as the other theretofore more popular forms of art product. As a consequence, we have to-day many valuable cabinets filled with the rarest and most costly examples of Old World skill. We have specialists in the study of Oriental art, collectors of Grecian and Roman potteries, ceramists who devote their attention to the wares of mediæval Europe, of Sèvres, of Wedgwood, and other forms



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of European work, and, be it said to our credit, no inconsiderable number of collectors who essay to cover the fictile arts of the world.

To this newly awakened interest and this growing appreciation of home product are doubtless due many of the important developments in native fictile art during recent years. With the breaking down of popular prejudice against American wares has come a greater measure of confidence on the part of the potters themselves. The time was—and that at a no remote period—when to stamp a piece of pottery with a legend, "Made in the United States," was to blast its prospect of sale and relegate it to the bargain counter or the lumber-room. To-day many of our manufacturers take pride in so stamping their goods, and do not suffer from their boldness. For instance, less than ten years ago a leading jewelry firm in one of our large cities refused to handle the delicate Belleek china made in Trenton unless it was stamped with a foreign or misleading mark to meet the prejudices of the purchaser. To-day Belleek ware finds extensive sale on its own merits.

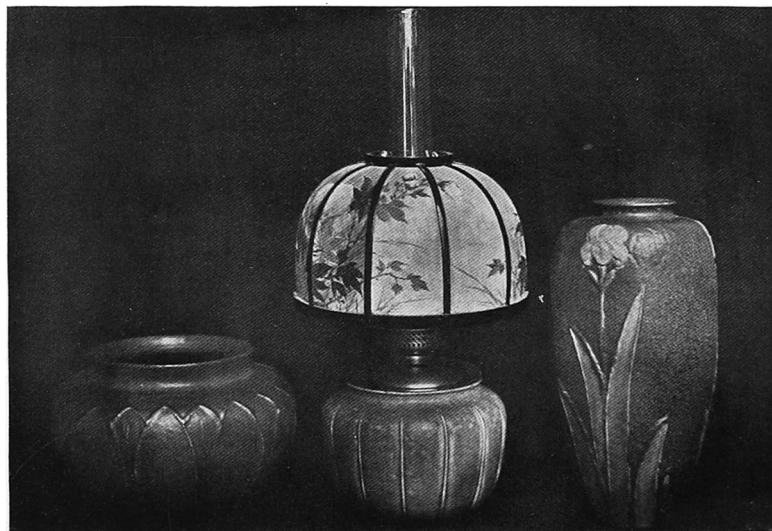
In 1893 Mr. Barber ventured the prediction that within the next few decades America was destined to lead the world in her ceramic manufactures. It would be idle to say that the prophecy has as yet been fulfilled in its entirety, but enough has been done in this country to prove that Mr. Barber's words were not the expression of a personal whim or a vagary. Since 1893 new potteries have sprung up and have taken their place beside those that have long been established, while the latter have developed new wares and have improved the old to an unprecedented extent.

In view of the old notion that nothing good in fictile art could come from our home potteries, it is interesting to note that at the

recent Paris Exposition our potters entered into competition with the civilized world and carried away their full share of honors. Indeed, it would scarcely be a violation of truth to say that American connoisseurs are beginning to discriminate in favor of home manufactures, and to point with pride to the stamp, "Made in the United States."

It is a long step from the first building-bricks made in Virginia, in 1612 to the beautiful Dedham, Grueby, Rookwood, Newcomb, and other choice American wares manufactured to-day. Before speaking of these recent products, a word of retrospect may not be unacceptable to the reader.

As stated before, the first white ware manufactured in this country was made about 1684. Terra-cotta roof tiling dates from 1740, and slip-decorated earthenware from 1760, both having been fabricated in Pennsylvania. The first successful attempt at underglaze decoration of white ware in America was made in Philadelphia in 1770, and it was fully fifty-five years after this that William Ellis Tucker, of Philadelphia, produced the first hard porcelain. The first Rockingham ware was made at East Liverpool, Ohio, by James Bennett, in 1839, and the following year transfer printing from engraved plates to pottery was accomplished at Jersey City. Parian ware dates from 1846, and inlaid floor tiles from 1853, both having been produced at Bennington, Vermont. Architectural terra-cotta took its rise in the



SPECIMENS OF GRUEBY WARE
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United States about 1870, and ornamental relief tiles about 1876. Eight years later the first Belleek or egg-shell pottery was produced in this country, at Trenton.

It will thus be seen that old as is our ceramic history—without

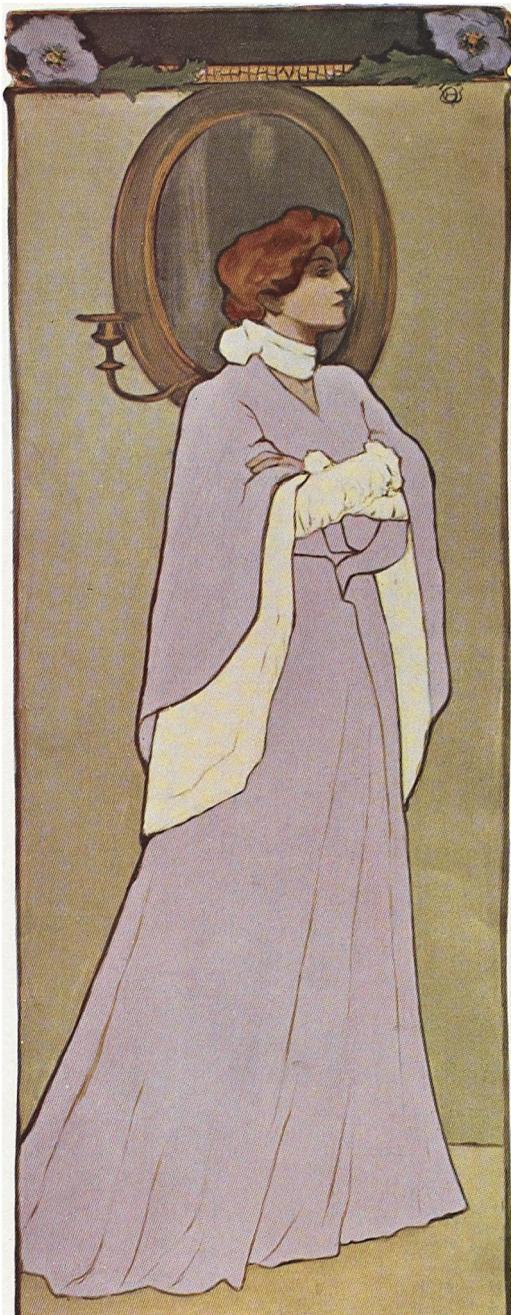
taking any account of aboriginal pottery—the best accomplishments among those just enumerated were crowded into a comparatively few years prior to or about the time of the first general awakening in 1876. It is not at all, therefore, a matter of surprise that we should find American pottery stepping to the fore so conspicuously within the last decade. The tide of popular indifference had been turned, and the ability of American to compete with European potters had been demonstrated before the Chicago Exposition centered the attention of the world upon the product of native kilns. Pride in home products, legitimate rivalry between manufacturers, and laudable



GRUEBY LAMP
Designed by George P. Kendrick

ambition on the part of designers have accomplished the rest.

When Mr. Barber wrote the first edition of the book referred to in the opening paragraph of this article, and made the bold prediction just quoted respecting the future of the fictile art in America, none of the wares now most highly prized by collectors and connoisseurs had been issued to the public. Of these later products, one of the



"PORTRAIT POSTER
MINNIE MADDERN FISKE"

most important, both from its finish and from the beauty of its designs, is the Grueby faience, manufactured in Boston.

Many competent critics regard this ware as the highest achievement of the potter's art in this country. It has a distinct individuality in character and tone. It is not the product of imitation, not mere decorated china, not clay vessels tricked out with designs borrowed from workers in other forms of art. It is simple and chaste, relying for its effect in a perfectly legitimate way on the superb finish of its surface, on the subdued richness of its colors, and on the ideas embodied in its designs. In this regard it is practically unique among American fictile products.

The Grueby Faience Company was not organized until 1897, and the popularity of its ware has thus been attained in the short period of four years. The cause for this is perhaps not far to seek. William H. Grueby, George P. Kendrick, and W. H. Graves, the originators of the enterprise, are all men thoroughly familiar with every detail of the potter's art, and what is more, are men of original bent of mind and of exceptionally good taste. Mr. Grueby, from whom the ware takes its name, is the discoverer of the peculiar glazes and enamels for which the pottery has become famous, and Mr. Kendrick supplies all the shapes and designs, seeking to embody in them ideas to give the goods distinctive character.

This pottery is entirely a hand-made product, no molds whatever being used in the establishment. The designs being executed by Mr. Kendrick, the modeling for the most part is done by young women graduates from different art schools, particularly the Boston Art Museum and the Normal and Cowles Art Schools. After the separate pieces have been worked into perfect form, the enamels are laid upon the surface to the thickness of about one thirty-second of an inch, and the firing is then done. The whole operation is performed under the personal supervision of Mr. Grueby.

The Grueby faience ware is not pottery designed to catch the fancy of those who delight in excessive ornamentation, high or varied colors, or elaborate patterns. It is a pottery rather that appeals to those who are fond of simplicity of design and rich but subdued monotones. The body of the ware is a hard semi-porcelain, and the decorations are conventionally treated floral forms in relief, which, as has aptly been pointed out, are suggestive of Egyptian art. The surface of the ware is glossless, satiny, the soft dull surface being a distinguishing trait rarely seen in pottery. The colors cover a wide range, greens, browns, yellows, and blues. In the manipulation of greens, however, the manufacturers have been most successful, and as a consequence greens predominate in the output of the establishment.

In point of number, therefore, the elements of beauty in the Grueby pottery are reduced to a minimum. Indeed, one may say that these are reduced to two—the rich monotone of the coloring and

the smooth, velvety surface of the glossless enamel. The designs, of course, are chaste and beautiful, and doubtless enter into the appreciation of connoisseurs; but after all, these are one of the least of the factors that constitute the popularity of the pottery, since the plainest object in earthenware colored with the Grueby enamel would have inherent beauty sufficient to satisfy people of cultivated taste.



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The manufacturers apparently realized this fact in adopting their scheme of decoration. Leaves partly unfolded, buds of the lily and the lotus conventionally treated, fleur-de-lis and other floral forms equally simple, all in relief and all for the most part in the same tone as the plain surface, are the only ornaments attempted. Occasionally, it is true, a second color is used on some of the raised portions of the design, but when this is the case, the second color is only sparingly used, and the strictest care is taken to make it harmonize with the prevailing color of the entire piece. In a word, such decorative

treatment as is resorted to serves merely to accentuate or in a sense outline the color of the body.

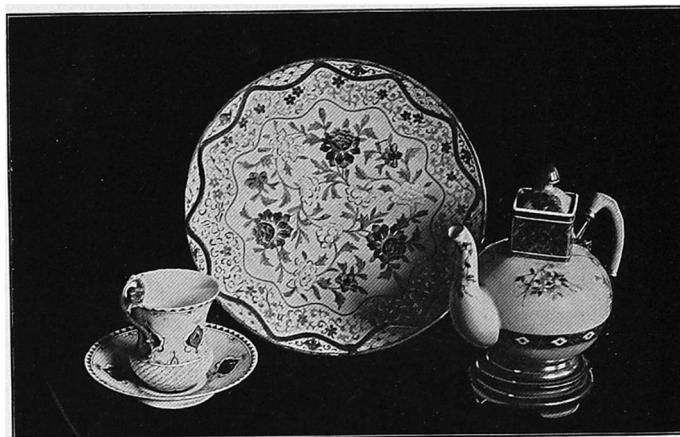
The illustrations herewith given will give a good idea of the typical forms in which the Grueby pottery is presented. The manufacturers are studious to avoid overdecoration and equally studious to place a ban upon mere oddity or uniqueness. Lines of grace, beauty of tone, softness of surface, and simplicity of effect are the cardinal principles underlying the manufacture, and it is assuredly a tribute to the artistic sense of the public that such simple elements wrought out in plastic form should meet popular favor.

Mr. Barber rightly says that no other product of American potteries possesses higher qualities of originality throughout than those which characterize the Grueby faience. This opinion coincides with that of exhibition juries, since at the Paris Exposition of 1900 the Grueby company was awarded two gold medals and one silver medal, and at the International Exposition of Ceramics, held in St. Petersburg in 1901, an additional honor was conferred upon the company in the form of a gold medal.

The pottery products of the United States antedating 1893 have for some time been a matter of recorded history. It is my purpose here to point out and emphasize only the more important artistic wares produced since that time. I shall speak of other achievements of the American potters in another paper.

WALTER ELLSWORTH GRAY.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



EXAMPLES OF DECORATED WARE